

## New school a special Haven

BY TANYANIKA SAMUELS

A NEW SOUTH BRONX charter school opening this fall will have a unique focus — catering to students and families in the child welfare system.

The Mott Haven Academy Charter School, which won approval from the state Board of Regents just last week, will open in a temporary site with 90 students in kindergarten and first grade.

Students will be selected through a lottery process, but classes will include children in the foster care system and preventive services programs.

"We've been frustrated over the years by the failure of the public school system to appropriately serve the population we serve," said Bill Baccaglioni, executive director of The

### Focus on foster-care students

Foundling, formerly known as the New York Foundling Hospital, which is sponsoring the school. "Our kids have some complicated needs."

The Foundling, in part, monitors children in the foster care system and provides intervention services for families. Many of these children, Baccaglioni said, have separation issues and have been abused and neglected.

"All these issues have been an impediment to these kids prospering in the public school system," he said. "Haven Academy is an attempt to remediate those issues."

The charter school will offer a standard curriculum, but students

will also be able to receive on-site counseling, medical care and other intervention services.

Also, school staffers will receive specialized training in child abuse and neglect to better react to children's needs.

Organizers expect some concern about a school that caters to students from the child welfare system.

"We're hoping that certain elements of the school — like small class sizes, enrichment programs and extended day programs — will attract parents and help them understand that this is a special learning environment," said Haven Academy Founder and Principal Jessica Nauiokas.

The plan is for the school eventually to serve 314 students in grades K-8. In 2010 it will move into a permanent site being built at 170 Brown Place.

The \$30 million, 55,000-square-foot complex will be a "green" building in order to address the area's high asthma rates and health concerns.

"We've been very intentional about designing every aspect of the school to help the needs of our students," Nauiokas said.

"We think this will be a new beginning for these kids and their families," Baccaglioni said.

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For information on the school:  
[www.nyfoundling.org](http://www.nyfoundling.org)